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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday, March 16, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "BLANKET NEWS." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations
U.S.D.A.

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The first warm spring day when the sun is shining and a light wind is blowing....that's the day to wash blankets. Those extra blankets that you won't be needing again until fall....now is the time to wash out winter soil and put them away out of reach of moths.

So today I'm reporting some news about cleaning and caring for blankets which comes direct from the Kansas Experiment Station where Katherine Hess recently made a blanket study.

Miss Hess says that if blankets are to keep their softness and fluffiness, they must have frequent airing and great care in cleaning and storing.

If you have any blankets that have been chemically treated to protect them from moths, you should have these dry cleaned, or re-treated after each laundering. Soap and water remove the substance put in to keep out moths.

As between dry cleaning and washing generally, Miss Hess found much less danger of shrinkage and matting of the wool when blankets were dry cleaned than when they were washed. But dry cleaning has the big disadvantage of being much more expensive than washing. Miss Hess believes, however, that if you have a very high-grade blanket made of fine wool, dry cleaning is probably worth the price. For the finer the wool, the greater the shrinkage.

Very often a commercial laundry does a better job of washing blankets than home washing because it keeps blankets stretched during drying and so prevents excessive shrinkage. Then, all well-equipped laundries have special machines built to prevent pounding and felting wool blankets. And most of them also have machines that brush up the nap of the blanket and leave it as soft and fluffy as when new. If the blankets are damp when they go through these brushing-and-fluffing machines, very little wool is lost.

Good commercial laundries today realize, as many housewives don't, that blankets must be treated gently while they are wet. Rubbing, pounding, wringing, even tumbling around in the ordinary washing machine will mat the wool and shrink it, and make the blanket thick and harsh and often too small for the bed.

But if you understand the rules for washing blankets properly, you can save money by giving them a bath at home. The first rule in washing blankets is to avoid extremes of temperature. Wool can't stand too much cold or too much heat. Lukewarm is the safe temperature for the washing and rinsing water, and for the air in which the blanket dries. Never have the washing water warmer than 90 degrees Fahrenheit, says Miss Hess. And never have it cold. Don't dry blankets too near a stove or a radiator, and don't dry them in a very cold place.

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The second rule for safe washing is to use soft water and mild neutral soap. Never use strong laundry soap or strong flakes.

If you have water that needs some softening, add 2 tablespoons of borax to each tubful. If a sediment forms when you add the borax, strain the water before you use it.

Soap suds, never soap in cake form, are best for washing blankets. To make a good permanent suds, dissolve the soap in a small quantity of hot water and add a sufficient amount of cool water to insure good permanent but lukewarm suds. Have plenty of suds--several tubfuls, and pass the blanket from one to another until all the dirt is out. Then rinse in clear lukewarm water, one tubful after another, until all the soap is removed. Clean wool thoroughly rinsed in soft water smells fresh and has a soft texture. Never leave any soapsuds in the wool. The soap may turn rancid and give the blanket a disagreeable odor.

Now about drying the blanket. (Here's where that sunny warm breezy spring day comes in.) Miss Hess advises: "Blankets should dry where the air circulates freely and where it is neither extremely hot nor cold." Some people pin the ends of the blanket together on the line. Others fold the blanket over the line and let the ends hang. Whichever you do, don't stretch the blanket where you pin it on the line. The part that is hanging loose tends to draw up as it dries. Watch this, and now and then pull the loose part out gently while it is drying.

For best results, turn the blankets as they dry. Hang them the other side out and reverse from ends to the middle, or from crosswise to lengthwise. This will keep the blankets in good shape. Never hang blankets so that one side has to bear the entire weight of the wet wool. Wool absorbs a lot of water and is weaker when it's wet. No part of the blanket can hold such a weight without wear and strain.

If you hang blankets on 2 lines a few feet apart, that will distribute the weight, and let the blanket dry fast. Also, air blowing on both sides of the blanket helps fluff up the nap, and make the blanket warmer and softer.

One last precaution: If the wind is blowing too strongly, bring the blankets in. A strong March wind can do as much harm by stretching and pulling as a gentle breeze can do good.

That's all the blanket-washing news for today. On another day I'll report on storing blankets for the summer.

